DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 967 SO 016 738

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TITLE Assessment of Gilligan's Model: Development of the Relationship Self Inventory.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, April 25-28, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attachment Behavior; Behavioral Science Research; Developmental Psychology; Developmental Stages; *Females; *Individual Development; *Interpersonal Relationship; Self Evaluation (Individuals)
IDENTIFIERS *Gilligan (C)

ABSTRACT

This study designed and tested the Relationship Self Inventory (RSI) intended to measure the self-descriptive value of Gilligan's "connected self-in-relation-to-others" model. Gilligan's research indicates that the formation of self based on connection with others and an orientation to care (connected self) is associated primarily with women. The RSI survey consists of 27 items arranged in four scales: (1) the Connected Self scale; (2) the Self Care from Need scale; (3) the Primacy of Other Care (POC) scale; and (4) the Self and Other Care Chosen Freely scale. The RSI survey was completed by 526 adult women, ages 21 to 85, most with a high school education or less. The Inventory was found to reliably measure Gilligan's model. Ninety percent of the respondents reported that the Connected Self scale was self-descriptive, and 60 percent indicated their care orientation was described by the POC scale. Consistent with Gilligan's model, the POC scale was self-descriptive of the older (42-85) rather than the younger (21-41) women. Homemakers (48 percent) were less likely than other respondents to be described by the Self Care from Need scale and the Self and Other Care Chosen Freely scale. (Author/RM)

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Assessment of Gilligan's Model: Development of the Relationship Self Inventory

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SP 016 738

ABSTRACT

The Relationship Self Inventory (RSI) measures the self-descriptive value of Gilligan's "connected self-in-relation-to-others." Perceptions of being connected in relation to others are based on an orientation to care of others and self. Relationships are engaged in through activities of care. According to Gilligan's model, which stems from her work on moral development, perceptions of the connected self are associated primarily with women.

The RSI was developed and examined in a sample of 526 women, aged 21 to 85 years. The survey consists of 27 items arranged in four scales found to be internally reliable across all ages of the respondents: 1) the Connected Self scale, 2) the Self Care from Need scale, 3) the Primacy of Other Care scale, and 4) the Self and Other Care Chosen Freely scale. Items tapping Gilligan's model of the separate/objective self did not measure consistently any concept meaningful to our sample. The items were not included in the RSI.

Ninety percent of the respondents reported that the Connected Self scale was self-descriptive, and 60% indicated their care orientation was described by the Primacy of Other Care (POC) scale. Consistent with Gilligan's model, the POC scale was self-descriptive of more older (42-85) than younger (21-41) women. Respondents who described their vocation as homemaker and the remaining respondents had similar ratings on the POC. However, homemakers (48% of the sample) were less likely than other respondents to be described by the Self Care from Need scale and the Self and Other Care Chosen Freely scale. The RSI appears to measure reliably Gilligan's model of the connected self in women.

Assessment of Gilligan's Model: Development of the Relationship Self Inventory

Theorists have long recognized that the development of the self is shaped, nurtured, and expanded through relationships with others. In her work on moral development, Gilligan (1982, 1984) has recently examined the development of the "self-in-relation-to-others." She has proposed two distinct modes which develop across the life span and are associated with gender. Her research indicates that the formation of self based on objective reciprocity in relationships (the objective/separate self) is associated primarily with men; and formation of self based on connection with others and an orientation to care (the connected self) is associated primarily with women. Among women for whom self is developed through connection with others, she also has found three groups who are differentiated by meanings of care of self and others: 1) Care of self is necessary because others will not care; 2) Care of others has priority over care of self; 3) Care of self is chosen freely since care for all, including self, is important (see Figure 1).

Gilligan's research challenges most traditional theories of self and psychosocial development across the life span. Her semi-structured interview (Gilligan, Langdale, Lyons, Murphy, 1982; Lyons, 1983), conducted only with highly educated and small samples, has not allowed wide-scale validation of her model. The present study was designed to develop a measure of her model of women's self development that could be administered easily and used with large samples of adolescents and adults.

Method

A survey booklet was voluntarily completed by 526 adult women attending a midwestern, on-campus, enrichment program. Traditionally the women attending this program have a high school education or less. Respondents were equally divided into three age categories (21-41, 42-55, and 56-85). Eighty percent

of the sample were married, 87% had two or more children, and 47% described their vocation as homemaker.

Participants rated the self-descriptive value of 50 survey items written to assess each aspect of Gilligan's model of self development: a) the separate/objective self, b) the connected self, c) self care from need, d) primacy of other care, and e) self and other care chosen freely. Items were rated on a five-point scale: 1 = "Not like me at all"; 3 = "Neutral"; 5 = "Very much like me."

Results

Based on inter-item correlations and Cronbach's alpha, we retained 27 items which form the Relationship Self Inventory (RSI). The RSI consists of four scales which are internally consistent, acceptably reliable at all ages, and measure Gilligan's model of the connected self and orientation to care: 1) the Connected Self scale, 2) Self Care from Need scale, 3) Primacy of Other Care scale, and 4) Self and Other Care Chosen Freely scale (see Table 1).

Analysis of the items written to tap development of the objective self showed no patterns of reliability, indicating that the items did not measure consistently any psychological construct meaningful to our respondents. The Connected Self scale was considered self-descriptive by 90% of our respondents.

Sixty percent of the respondents indicated that the Primacy of Other Care scale (POC) was self-descriptive. There were no differences between homemakers ($\bar{X}$=3.68) and other women's ($\bar{X}$=3.63) ratings on the POC scale, $t(521)=.76$, $p=.45$, ns. However, homemakers ($\bar{X}$=2.74) had lower ratings than others ($\bar{X}$=3.06) on the Self Care from Need scale, $t(521)=3.73$, $p<.0001$. Homemakers ($\bar{X}$=2.85) also had lower ratings than others ($\bar{X}$=2.98) on the Self Care Chosen Freely scale, $t(521)=2.18$, $p<.03$.

The Primacy of Other Care scale was self-descriptive of more women age

42-55 (92%) and age 56-85 (95%) than it was of women age 21-41 (85%), $\underline{X}^2(2, \underline{N}=526)=6.56$, $p<.04$. Longitudinal research is needed to determine whether these differences are due to cohort differences or this finding validates Gilligan's model, which indicates primacy of care for others tends to develop after need for care of self.

Discussion

As expected, Gilligan's model of the connected self can be assessed in survey format. The RSI reliably assesses women's perceptions of the centrality of connectedness to the self-in-relation-to-others. Important issues that have arisen from Gilligan's model can now be researched more easily. These include the importance of life transitions and the nature of developmental changes in perceptions of connectedness and orientation to three types of care.

Our data combined with Gilligan's research indicate her model is appropriate for study of self development in different populations of women. It is clear that the RSI, including items tapping the objective/separate self, needs to be administered and further developed with samples which include both men and women. Revision and further validation of the RSI is currently underway.

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Table 1

Item Factor Loadings and Scale Reliabilities of the Relationship Self Inventory

Scale	Factor Loadings	Scale Reliabilities			
			Age Range		
		Total Sample	21-41	42-55	56-85
Connected Self Scale		.75	.79	.68	.74
4. Caring for other people is important to me.	.70				
6. If I knew I were to die within the year, I would be more concerned for my loved ones than for my unfinished occupational goals.	.45				
8. It is necessary for me to take responsibility for the effect my actions have on others.	.41				
10. Those about whom I care deeply are part of who I am.	.54				
13. Doing things for others makes me happy.	.65				
16. Activities of care that I perform expand both me and others.	.54				
27. Taking care of other people is important to me.	.55				
Self Care from Need Scale		.74	.75	.75	.70
7. I believe I must care for myself because others are not concerned with my needs.	.56				
12. The only person who I can really trust and rely on is myself.	.66				
14. I believe that in order to survive I must concentrate more on taking care of myself than on taking care of others.	.53				
18. You've got to look out for yourself or the demands of circumstance and other people will eat you up.	.48				
25. What it all boils down to is that the only person I can rely on is myself.	.76				
Primacy of Other Care Scale		.64	.65	.64	.60
2. I try to curb my anger for fear of hurting others.	.46				
5. Being unselfish with others is a way I make myself happy.	.51				
9. I often keep quiet rather than hurt someone's feelings, even if it means giving a false impression.	.38				
11. Being unselfish with others is more important than making myself happy.	.44				
22. My own personal achievements are rarely important enough to justify causing hurt and pain to others.	.46				
23. If what I want to do upsets other people, I try to think again to see if I really want to do it.	.52				
24. In choosing a vocation helping others is more important to me than money, prestige, or personal challenge.	.37				
Self and Other Care Chosen Freely		.65	.63	.73	.59
1. Sometimes I have to hurt others if I am to do the things that are important in my own life.	.55				
3. Sometimes I have to accept hurting someone else if I am to do the things that are important in my own life.	.55				
15. I no longer think this way, but I used to believe that the greatest good is self-sacrifice because of love.	.31				
17. I cannot always do what my loved ones want if it causes me to make a sacrifice.	.45				
19. I cannot choose to help someone else if it will hinder my self-development.	.47				
20. True responsibility involves making sure my needs are cared for before I care for others.	.45				
21. Taking care of myself sometimes means I have to say no to others.	.32				
26. I no longer think this way, but I used to believe that true responsibility is the same as caring for others, even if it means less care for myself.	.37				

Mode 1. THE SEPARATE/OBJECTIVE SELF

Formation is based on an orientation to equality, objectivity, and separateness

Relationships are engaged in through rules of reciprocity, which stem from role-based duties of obligation and commitment

Ideal is equality and fairness based in reciprocity

Mode 2. THE CONNECTED SELF

Formation is based on an orientation to care of self and others

Relationships are engaged in through activities of care in response to others in their terms, which stems from a belief in the interconnectedness of people

Ideal is consideration of individual's particular needs

Three Meanings of Care of Self and Others

SELF CARE FROM NEED

PRIMACY OF OTHER CARE

SELF AND OTHER CARE CHOSEN FREELY

Figure 1. Gilligan's model of two modes of the self in relationships, derived from Gilligan (1982) and Lyons (1983).